

TO: Superintendents
Special Education Directors
Special Education Cooperative Directors
Building Principals

FROM: Linda McCulloch
Superintendent of Public Instruction

RE: Paraprofessional Recognition Week, February 1-7, 2004

The first week of February (February 1-7, 2004) has been proclaimed as Paraprofessional Recognition Week. Because of this auspicious occasion, I would like to share this Certificate of Recognition with you and also pass along several strategies to celebrate this week. The certificate can be accessed on the Office of Public Instruction's Website: www.opi.state.mt.us. In addition, on April 2, 2004, Paraprofessionals of the Year and Para/Teacher Teams from each CSPD Region will be recognized at the Montana Council for Exceptional Children Conference on Diverse Abilities in Billings.

Paraprofessionals include, but are not limited to, those individuals who work as educational assistants, bus assistants, special education paraprofessionals, tutors, job coaches, lunchroom and playground assistants, hall monitors and library and media center assistants. In the past, districts have used many strategies to recognize the contributions of paraprofessionals who are essential to every school. Some have chosen to honor paraprofessionals in the following ways:

- Provide Apples ("You Are The Apple of My Eye")
- Give a certificate of recognition at the school board meeting
- Write positive comments about each paraprofessional
- Send information to parents and students acknowledging the role of paraprofessionals via school newsletters
- Recognize your school's paraprofessionals with appropriate mementos of appreciation such as flowers, certificates, pins, etc.
- A candy for each day of the week:
 - Treasures (You Are Our Treasure)
 - Chocolate Kisses and Hugs
 - Life Savers (You Are A Lifesaver)
 - 100 Grand Candy Bars (You Are Worth More To Us Than 100 Grand)
 - York Peppermint Patty (You Are Worth A Mint)
- Construct a bulletin board at school highlighting various roles of the school's paraprofessionals
- Advertise in the school or district newsletter about Montana Paraprofessional Week
- Invite local radio stations to broadcast the names of paraprofessionals, the schools in which they work, and their responsibilities in the classroom
- Recognize one or two paraprofessionals each day, announcing their names and roles over the loudspeaker during the daily announcements
- Announce and thank paraprofessionals within the classroom in front of the students
- Organize an appreciation lunch, an after school tea, before school brunch, or have the paraprofessionals served by teachers and administrators

Please share this information with your staff. For further information on paraprofessionals and staff development opportunities, please contact Susan Bailey-Anderson at (406) 444-2046 or email sbanderson@state.mt.us.